

DESIGN DESTINATION

four pillars laboratory

The strangest thing about this spectacular Sydney gin palace is that it didn't exist until now

Australia is in the grip of a steamy love affair with gin and the award-winning Yarra Valley-based gin distillery Four Pillars is riding the wave with the opening of their first gin bar, Four Pillars Laboratory. There, you'll find an ever-expanding range of premium gins (Bloody Shiraz Gin anyone?) and a cocktail-friendly snack menu by food legend Matt Wilkinson in a moody interior by YSG Studio.

Laboratory sits in the modernist 1930s Bussell Brothers building on Sydney's Crown Street. The idea was to create a thriving gin emporium, divided into three main areas of gin culture: a gin store where you can taste and get your hands on limited-edition Four Pillars gins, an on-site distillery that creates some of the gin on offer, and a gin bar with speakeasy vibes where gin cocktails rule, thrown about with juniper-friendly ingredients like Davidson plum, blood lime, dill and caramel.



“The lampshades were all hand-dyed by Steven Vella, who is an opera art finisher and costume designer”

YASMINE GHONIEM, YSG



PHOTOGRAPHY: STEVEN WOODBURN (CHEF MATT AND FOOD)

Slide into one of the (bookings only) booths at Eileen’s bar, where juniper berry is the essential ingredient – its colour forming the backbone of the palette throughout, from the deep juniper blue and black tartan Kvadrat/Raf Simons fabric on the seating to the 11-metre, U-shaped, juniper-blue concrete bar.

It’s a beyond-chic kind of neighbourhood place, and designer Yasmine Ghoniem from YSG Studio had that in mind from the start. “The most important thing to create in a bar like this is myriad experiences, so that repeat patrons have unique memories every time they visit.”

That inspired some unusual design elements. “Four Pillars wanted the bar to take centre stage and for the seating to recede into darkness,” says Yasmine. “We also lined a side passage in organic timber joinery by Jonathan West, which came about because there wasn’t enough room between the bar and the perimeter to accommodate larger tables and we decided to orientate patrons facing each other for a more intimate experience.” Perfectly lit, this romantic part of the venue truly screams ‘first date’, hence the nickname ‘Tinder Lane’.

The dark and dreamy interior may be a local attraction for inner Sydney, but don’t underestimate the real star – the drinks. This new joint is a true ode to gin in all its glory. **10**

PREVIOUS PAGE The juniper-blue bar was designed by YSG and made by Concreative. Its spherical fibreglass pendant lights by Anomolous appear to float in the space. Custom Sia stools by Tom Fereday in Kvadrat/Raf Simons fabric. **THESE PAGES** (clockwise from top left) A corner nook in Eileen’s Bar, with timber light made by Maiden using a hand-dyed Steven Vella lampshade from local business Chee Soon & Fitzgerald. Outside the beautiful Bussell Brothers building. The stairway to Eileen’s Bar, clad in Portuguese cork panels with a glass-faced timber niche display by YSG. A shot of the Gin Shop, showcasing its Australian red cedar and Cambia ash joinery by Jonathan West. Matt Wilkinson. Gin Lab martini with the Angelachu Anchovies, pickled shallot and Pepe Saya butter. Another gin experience. Four Pillars entrance. Yasmine Ghoniem.



A SIDE WITH THAT?

Matt Wilkinson is the creative director of Four Pillars’ new food range

How did you create this gin-friendly menu?

Our main ethos for the food was “enough to keep you from starvation but not an entire meal”. Basically, the menu is a look into some of the best bar snacks around the world that both [distillery creative director] Jimmy Irvine and I love. We wanted it to be fun, simple and delicious, and then I just weaved in some of the Made From Gin products that we’ve launched.

What’s your hot tip to order?

The Sydney Lab Martini is a must, paired with Angelachu Anchovies on thickly buttered baguette, pickled shallots and chilli sauce. Or the Navy Strength Gin and Capi Flamin’ Ginger Beer with lime bitters and one of our Steak and Pepper Party Pies with smoked tomato relish. It’s bangin!

Four Pillars Gin Laboratory, 406-410 Crown Street, Surry Hills, NSW; fourpillarsgin.com